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## ALBERT DÜRER—A LESSON.

IN the series of designs which Albert Dürer made to illustrate the life of the Virgin Mary there is one which represents, in a quaint fashion, the Repose in Egypt. The Virgin sits at one side plying her distaff with both hands, and rocking with her foot the rude cradle where the child, tightly swathed, and strapped into his nest, is sleeping soundly. Over his head two angels are leaning; the one with a youthful, joyful face scatters flowers over him, symbolical of the blessings that await him, whether they be mother's love, or friends, or the higher joy of doing and being good;—the other, a sad and dark-browed messenger, looks down with distress upon the little innocent, unconscious sleeper, and wrings his hands in agony as he sees, in vision, the evil that is to befall him. Meanwhile, the happy mother, dreaming of no ill, smiles with as sweet a mother's smile as ever painter drew; and, neither looking forward nor backward, enjoys with calm delight the present bliss; safe in a friendly land, her child beside her, her husband near, and feeling, perhaps, the presence of the angelic visitants, but without exultation as without fear.

In the centre of the foreground, old Joseph is busily engaged in hollowing out a large log, apparently for the purpose of making a water-trough; whether to earn some money from the Egyptians by the exercise of his proper craft, or to accommodate his own beast—that faithful ass on which, if we may believe the old painters, Mary rode comfortably from Jerusalem to Egypt with the babe in her arms, while her husband trudged by her side with all their worldly effects in a small bundle—we can only guess; we may smile in passing, if we will, at Dürer's notion of Egyptian Architecture, which looks, for all the world, like what we know of German

house-building of the fifteenth century. But, smile we must, whether we will or no, at this busy company of mischievous little angels, mere fledglings, who are swarming about the patient, plodding Joseph like so many earthly children. Some are raking up the chips with which his adze has plentifully strewn the ground; others are piling them into baskets; one has, in a humor of quiet mischief, donned the great beaver hat of the unconscious Joseph, and industriously works away, clad in the hat and in very little else, unless it be his wings, before the very eyes of that excellent person, who is apparently so intent on his task that he sees nothing at all—if, indeed, it be not wholly invisible—of what is going on about him. Evidently, other angels in the immediate vicinity have heard of the new comers, and are on their way; one has just entered, having run himself quite out of breath, and is greeted with a hearty shake of the hands by a boisterous little urchin who has just made himself a whirligig out of two of Joseph's most successful chips!

This subject of the Repose in Egypt was a favorite one with the old painters,\* but this design of Dürer's is the most delightfully fresh and poetic we have ever seen. Dürer himself was a simple-hearted, hard-working man, the son of hard-working people, bred origi-

\* There is a very pretty conception of this subject by Lucas Cranach, a contemporary of Dürer (Dürer died twenty-five years before him), in which the holy family is quite eclipsed by the swarm of little cherubs who are engaged in the most active way in making themselves useful. Their principal occupation seems to be, cutting down branches of trees for firewood, Cranach probably thinking it as cold in Egypt as it is in Germany. One little urchin has become so immoderately thirsty by reason of overheating himself in his endeavors to hew down willow twigs, that he is plunging head-foremost into a brook, after the fashion of a duck. But this of Cranach's is mere play of fancy. There is nothing deeper in it.

nally to a trade, and going on his apprentice journey like other young men who had served their time. He was not born, however, to be a mechanic; he had not the right make for it. He was industrious, worked hard and continuously, leaving an amount of work behind him that proves he could never have been idle; was able to do a great many things; could paint and draw, after a marvellous fashion, with all sorts of materials and implements; engraved on steel, wood, copper, iron; carved some of his designs in hone-stone as finely and delicately as if it were chalk; wrote books—a work on Fortification, in which is all that was known of that art in his time, and much that he contributed himself to the stock; another on the Proportions of the Human Figure, in which he makes many singularly acute observations; and though the book, like almost all he did, is whimsical in parts, yet it is still respected by scholars; and lastly a work on Perspective, in which, also, he has embodied all that was known of that science, which just then was interesting all the ingenious people of Europe, artists most of all, and making them fill their pictures with buildings, colonnades, niches, and whatever could give them a chance to show what they knew, and sometimes as it proved, what they did not know. Dürer took hold of this study with eagerness; he was never tired of it, and being of a most ingenious, inventive turn of mind, he made many discoveries, and devised several clever expedients for overcoming practical difficulties.

You would say, perhaps, that such an ingenious, industrious man would have made an excellent mechanic; and so he would, perhaps, if industry and ingenuity were all the requisites; but Dürer was restless; he did nothing systematically; his books have no plan; his designs are full of thought, full of incident, they are wonderfully interesting,

but they are often crowded and confused; he had so active, teeming a brain that he could never have worked at any one trade all his life, doing the same thing over and over again. What calms and balances other men—the mass of men—and makes them love steady work, and so keeps the world moving orderly by settled laws—would have never done for him; to have been tied to a bench, would have killed him. It seems strange at first sight, inconsistent, almost, to say this, with one of his wonderful copper-plates before us. We look at, study it, go over it inch by inch, and the impression of the patience of the man, his skill, his untiring steadiness of hand, his matchless fineness of sight, and then again his patience, sinks deep into our minds, and we wonder at ourselves for writing of him as we have; but the inconsistency is only apparent; he did work steadily while he worked but he worked at an immense variety of things, and he had to do so; he did not begin things and leave them, but he sat down with his German phlegm to a task that would make an American or a Frenchman quail, and went at it with a cheerful plodding enjoyment, worked at it with all his might, put his whole heart and his whole brain into it, made it as perfect as he could—and that means, perfect!—and then put it aside, and went, with equal courage, patience, enjoyment, at something very different.

He never cared for money; made it and spent it; squandered it on the silliest trifles; the wonder is, that he left anything behind him. No wonder that his wife's love cooled toward him, that her temper soured, that they grew ever wider and wider apart. Dürer was a pious, God-fearing man; goodness ran in his blood; he lived a life of virtue, but this foible made his home unhappy, and perhaps it was more easily made so because his Agnes became his wife by that infernal, old European system of

barter and sale; and, not sweet love brought them together in their spring-time, but two old men chaffering over their money-bags.\*

Dürer was, indeed, no mechanic, although born of a father who was one, surrounded by a family of brothers who were mechanics, and, for the most part, associating entirely, with people of that class, which was, indeed, at that time, in Germany, a class in which a man as able as Dürer could find good company in plenty. He was, however, all his life a deep and sincere sympathizer with the class to which he belonged by birth and breeding. He had, apparently, no ambition to get out of it; took easily to the society of rich and titled people, if need be, but as easily came back again to his old house, and his wife, his maid Susanna, and the plain people of his town. Over and over again, he shows his sympathy with toil, and suffering, and poverty, and honest sweat, and throws himself with his whole heart into scenes that bring them before us. His series of wood-cuts—"The Life of The Virgin," "The Passion of our Lord"—are simple-hearted, sincere, and, sometimes, rude, but strong, glowing, passionate hymns, in which suffering and poverty and patience are made holy and beautiful. These designs of Dürer rightly stand apart from all others that ever were made, by their earnestness alone; for there is in them something far higher than their art; they have touched the heart of the world, because here, for once, it finds an artist striving to infuse into his designs, or, rather, not striving, but simply expressing with a fervor, before which everything diletante and conventional shrivels up and

is burnt away—the deep Christian sympathy with humanity that was the basis of his being.

One of the facts connected with the history of Art that has, for us, the strongest interest is that, it has always sprung up—like a blade of grass in a prison floor—in the homes of the poor. It is true that we find this the case with many other things; with learning, science, discovery, invention, and the crafts that keep the world alive; poverty is the great reservoir which God keeps always filled, and out of which he has ordained that his best gifts to the race shall flow; poverty is, without a figure, a salt that keeps the world sweet; it is an incentive, a spur, a breeder of transforming desires; riches are a shining goal, a fruit that hangs golden and splendid on the tree of life, but they are only a goal; attainment is a weariness, and the fruit is gold without, ashes within. Many good things we owe to poverty—that nurse of inventions—but the others than Art were to be expected. They are for the body's health mostly, they are to feed it, clothe it, warm it. We dig into the earth, and are not surprised to find there, coal and iron, lead and tin; but, good as these are, God seems a thrifty provider only, a prudent husband, as we uncover these stores laid up for us in by-gone centuries; it is only when, deep down in the earth, we find the emerald lying, which God's fingers placed there before man was made—a sweet prophecy of grass and leaves before such things were—a thing whose only use is its beauty, made for the pleasure of man's eye alone—it is then that we begin to feel the warmth of the Divine heart which loved us, before his thought of us took shape, with a love that had deeper, sweeter pulses in it than beds of coal or mines of iron could show.

And so, when we find quick-witted,

\* Some day, if we live, we will strike a chivalrous blow for Agnes Frey, who, certainly, can be righteously defended against that old pedant Pirkheimer's evil tongue; and we dare say that Dürer himself, if there be any truth in Spiritualism, will help us, now that he knows himself and her better, to some good arguments.

thoughtful boys inventing safety-lamps, thinking out steam-engines; a poor negro hitting upon the notion of a needle; a peasant, or some unknown one, struck with the happy thought of printing; poor men of all degrees of poverty inventing cotton-gins, and carding machines, and a hundred other useful things, it seems all right and reasonable; we are glad they did it, are pleased when they are well rewarded, sorry when they lose, as they too often do, the fruit of their toil, but it stirs no enthusiasm in us. Enthusiasm comes, the deep glow of the heart, the feeling of God's presence, when we see the artist-impulse stirring Giotto as he tends his sheep on the hill-side; or Turner catching sight of the immortal beauty of the world through the foul London fogs, and out of the squalor of the London streets. And, not these alone, but many, many more have felt the breath of the haunting beauty on their cheeks, have heard the motion of her hovering wings, have caught her whispered words of cheer, and seen her face, if only in their dreams; and the inspiration of her presence has made the narrow walls a temple, the scanty food forgotten, or tasting like the bread of God, has turned the draught of water to wine, and laid a hand of consecration on the head that poverty, and want, and care had marked as their own.

Let any one read the lives of the great artists, and he will find that the large majority of them sprung from poverty and want; at the very least, from humble life. Many of them were thwarted in their efforts to pursue art as a vocation; many of them had to fight against opposition, to tear themselves violently away from the ordered ways marked out for them, and struggle from the confinement of shops, and counting-room and trades, to the free air of the life they loved. In the earlier days of art, in Italy, this was less often the case,

because in that country art was recognized as a distinct profession, easily made lucrative, especially as the influences at that time predominating seemed to stimulate the artistic creative power, and feed the love of beauty. But, though a calling, it was a trade, not a profession. It had no dignity in itself, and we doubt if any amount of genius, any commendation bestowed on his work by church or people would ever have reconciled a noble house to the adoption of that trade by one of its members.

Still, it was a means of advancement, and offered good prizes to the children of humble people. If a boy proved a clever painter, first one, then another convent would send for him to come and paint its walls; then, a neighboring nobleman must have some frescoes; and the church of his native village, or perhaps that of some larger and more important neighboring place would demand an altarpiece at his hands. And thus fortune might grow, and trade thrive, for a good deal of it was trade and nothing more; though much of it, also, was more than trade, and in the early time there was undoubtedly a great deal of real religious feeling and earnestness in the practice of the art.

Artists, however, were, in the days we speak of, poor men. They earned their living, and were treated with respect, but they came of poor people, and for the most part left little behind them when they died. Poverty had nursed them at her breasts, had blessed them with all the blessing she had to give: they shared no exclusive fortune, but they belonged by birth and education to the great, common brotherhood of man. What it suffers, they had suffered; what neglect in childhood, what ignorance, what want, what nakedness, what sense of estrangement from the rich and fortunate. What it enjoys they had enjoyed, and the joy was as deep as the sorrow; the sense of

freedom, the rough, but, on the whole, kindly nurture of nature, the rude health, the alert mind, the sharpening of all the faculties in the keen strife for life itself. They ought to have been more human than their fellows; they ought to have been broader, nobler, better; they ought to have stood upon their experience of the dark side of life as on a platform, and preached the good and evil of that experience to the world.

But, how was it? Certainly, the sum total of the result is other than this. Artists have, indeed, exerted a wide influence on the culture of the race, but they have done very little to teach or elevate the race. This, after long reflection, is the conclusion we have come to. Nothing seems to prove to us the inferiority—intellectual and spiritual, of the artist class—so much as the fact that they have not known how to use their splendid opportunity. There was a brief period when they did know how, and when they used it fitly and fully. But, even then, there were few men with great ideas; hardly one, the greatness and richness of whose thoughts has immortalized him. Of the older men there is no Shakespeare, no Dante, hardly a Chaucer. Even the whole cycle of picture—we mean all the works of all the men taken together—is it equal to the work of either of these men?

True, these men were religious, and they devoted themselves to the perpetuation and dissemination of the history and teachings of the Church. Let us not be bigoted. We admit that, what stood to them for highest, many of them, especially those earlier painters of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, passed their lives in, embodying, with all their skill, on the walls of churches and convents, where those who could not read the written word—and then, books were not—might read the

sacred story with their own eyes—a painted Gospel for young and old. Praise them and thank them for it. It was a good and pious work, and it was well and worthily done.

But, remember, that the men who worked in this spirit were few, and those who came after them forgot their work, and wandered into other more attractive paths. And even their work is not rich in great or fruitful ideas; the path they trod with firm step was narrow, and the altar at which they worshipped was never destined to be the altar of a race. Born in an age of religious enthusiasm such as the world had never seen, an age in which Europe seemed to palpitate in the glow of a passion for God, which raised the whole nature to the height of its inspiration, and made every faculty creative, these men could share in the universal enthusiasm, and make their voices heard in the thunder-burst of tumultuous music. But it was a measured strain they sang, and the highest works of painting pale beside the splendor of the thirteenth-century's architecture, and the poetry of Dante. Life seemed to have but lightly moved these artists; experience stirred no depths in their nature; they had no utterance meet to chime with the hymn that burst from the lips of a race that saw the light of its new morning streak the skies; no answer meet for the wild questioning cries that wandered in the doubtful light of that, as yet, unrisen morrow. For all reply, they could but count their beads, and patter their prayers.

And, as time went, art in all its branches steadily declined in spiritual power, even as in some it grew strong and proud in its material resources. Even the slim pretence of prophecy and inspiration, and a desire to play a part in the elevation of the race, was abandoned. Art became more and more sensual, and time-serving, and impoverished in ideas.

At the very time when artists were men of remarkable intellectual power, and possessed a degree of skill in many arts and sciences that is to us still a matter of astonishment, we find them using all this power and all this skill in tasks so trivial, so base, so devoid of all spiritual life, that never any waste of strength seems to have been so complete. The world was the poorer for these men having lived in it, when, if we had looked at their attainments, their ability, their power of brain, we should have prophesied that the works of such men must exercise a world-wide power over the hearts and minds and souls of their fellows.

One man only, living in this later time of debasement, when these mighty watch-towers of intellect and learning and skill gave out only a flickering light, or, at best, a flame that spired to heaven and lured the wanderers to rocky deaths—Albert Dürer—was true to a nobler ideal. Amid much that is unsettled, much that is of a whimsical strain, the great drift of all his work is spiritual. He claimed no peculiar insight, seems hardly conscious that he had it, certainly never writes as if he knew the deeper meaning of his work; but, his is one of those cases where it cannot reasonably be denied that the artist had deep thought—deeper, often, than we can read. Read as subtly as we may, a deeper meaning seems always to underlie.

For Dürer was in earnest. He would not play with life, nor make a toy, or merchandize of his gift. With no asceticism, no fanaticism, showing only a simple German piety in his daily life, and not knowing that he showed even that—God was yet his great regard. His work is often playful, often of a rude, uncombed, hairy strength, that repels fine people. But he is never coarse, never lewd, has no double meanings. He lived in a strong, masculine time, when

a spade was always getting called a spade; and, sometimes in his letters, he blurts out a word that cannot be translated, must be left in the friendly disguise of the old German; but this was all external; a purer heart, a more pious nature—God-ward and man-ward—never lodged in a human breast.

So, his work is like him, and alone of all that late fifteenth, early sixteenth—century—art grows dearer and dearer to the world. Men are wearying of Raphael and Correggio and Leonardo of Del Sarto, and even of Angelo; they admire them, pay ample homage to what greatness there was in them,—and, surely, as powerful an intellect as ever was on the earth was Angelo's—but a fatal influence was on him, and the world's heart throbs before no work that he has left behind him.

But Dürer was true to humanity. He had suffered, and he rejoiced to know that he had shared the lot of his Master. Humanity was dearer to him, more worthy, that Christ had borne its image; Christ was dearer, because he had shared the humanity that he revered and loved. And, with a simple, childlike reverence, but with a sympathy that burned and glowed, he set before his fellows the suffering that Christ had endured for them. He had been happy; he was of a mild and cheerful temper, and he enjoyed the world, and this feeling continually sweetens and enlivens his work, and crops out in unforeseen places, and harmonizes the otherwise too great severity of his designs. This playful humor makes another link to bind him to the heart of our time, that is searching everywhere for men in the past, who lived, who loved their kind, who lived a worthy, manly life in their day and generation, and whose names are to be set in the temple that we are building, consecrated to the earnest workers of the world.

Thus, at the very threshold, we

are met by these questions, as to the real value of art to humanity, the relative worthiness of these widely different careers. Is Art worthy to be placed by the side of Religion, of Science, as a regenerator of mankind, a teacher, a helper? Is the work of all these men, moved by different purposes, aiming at different goals, all alike Art, and to be judged irrespective of the ideas, the motives that underlie it? Is Art never to be more than this, never to be other, never able to command the free, untaught homage of the race, to be the friend of many men, of noble women, or is it to be always as now, in America as in Europe, the minister to luxury, the friend of pride, the feeder of vanity, the splendid toy of the idle and the rich?

These questions will have to be answered, are, in fact, getting answered in some quarters, savagely enough. There are signs of an awakening among those who live outside of the charmed circle where artists and amateurs and connoisseurs live in a sort of Fool's Paradise, snugly ensconced from heat or cold. The world wishes to know, once for all, whether this is the end of the artist's existence. Will he stand up like a man and say, clearly, what he is here for? These many generations he has been left undisturbed, doing his pleasure. He claimed immunities, privileges, rewards. He said that his work was a great, spiritual, religious, civilizing work. He talked an intolerable deal of jargon, and was listened to, hat in hand, by the humble, low, work-a-day world. That patient, stolid, large-hearted creature, listened, we say, to all this, without so much as saying a word by way of demur. It had its suspicions, now and then a bold doubt, but it went on its way and did its serious, common-place, wearying work day after day, year after year, while the artist sauntered in his pleasant paths. Now, the world has made up its mind to ask a question, and have it answered.

It asks in plain English, of the artist—"What is your use? What do you do for me and my children? What do you do for yourself? Can you help me in this fight I am waging with sin, with ignorance, with folly of all sorts; or, are you only a bummer in the battle?"

For our part, we have not the shadow of a doubt that the world will do well to trust the future of Art. A new spirit stirs in it to-day; new blood runs through its veins. Christ, the great reformer, who in our day has knocked at so many doors, has at last knocked at the studios, and here and there he has entered and taught. Can we be allowed to say this without fearing the charge of Pharisaism or arrogance? It seems to us plain truth. Art was rapidly reaching a point where it would have been no longer possible to draw the line between it and other sensual gratifications. Already some of the trades counted lowest were striving to lift themselves to a better position by taking the name of artist; and, the right could not well be logically disputed. Go through the academy even to-day, with a keen, shrewd, common-sense man, who shall have a large receptive nature, and culture enough, and ask him to point out the pictures that are higher in the scale than hair-cutting, tight-rope dancing, opera singing; how many do you think he will find? Surely he will find some; surely he will find enough to make us hope strongly for the future; he will find few, but on those few we build a lofty anticipation.

For not in England alone, nor in France, but here, in our own America, artists begin plainly to acknowledge that they recognize their duty to do a more serious, worthy work in the world than hitherto—work that shall make them respected, and give them a title to at least something of the position they have claimed and had freely accorded them. They have manfully accepted



criticism, and have given up their childish theory of their immunity from the risks that other men run. We have probably heard the last of Art being "a delicate personal vocation," which no gentleman will interfere with by asking troublesome questions; and, in good time, artists who wish to confute the critics will prefer to do it by painting good pictures rather than by writing angry letters to the newspapers. This state of things is healthy, and is the first stage of progress. The artist must be content to work. He must throw himself wholly into his vocation, as if it were a vocation. He must absolutely refuse to make a trade of it. Only by an utter refusal to let the question of

money enter into his calculations, can he sustain the claim of his profession to sit side by side with the highest ministers to human culture. He must be content to work for years, if need be, poor and unknown, nourished by the faith which is built on a large experience, that good work, really good work, is as sure to sell as the air is to be breathed. Let him accept poverty as his bride; let him take courage to kiss the lips of that wrinkled, scarred and hideous hag, and when the morning dawns he shall see her, in that rosy light, transformed, at his side, to an immortal beauty, whose love shall more than pay him seven-fold for his desolate hours, his bitter tears.

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SONNET.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN.

Oft had I heard thy beauty praised, dear flower;  
 And often sought for thee through field and wood;  
 Yet could I never find the secret bower  
 Where thou dost lead, in maiden solitude,  
 A cloistered life, until, this autumn day,  
 Beside a tree that shook her golden hair,  
 And laughed at death, flaunting her rich array,  
 I found thee, blue as the still depths of air  
 Seen, leagues away, between the pine-wood boughs.  
 Oh, never yet a gladder sight hath met  
 These eyes of mine! Depart, before the snows  
 Of hastening winter thy fringed garments wet!  
 Thine azure flowers should never fade nor die  
 But bloom, exhale and gain their native sky.

C. C.

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ARCHITECTURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

"But though we are thus compelled to disallow several of the claims which have been put forward in support of the scientific character of the middle ages, there are two points in which we may, I conceive, really trace the progress of scientific ideas among them; and which, therefore, may be considered as the pre-

lude to the period of discovery. I mean their practical architecture, and their architectural treatises.

"In a previous chapter of this book, we have endeavored to explain how the indistinctness of ideas, which attended the decline of the Roman empire, appears in the forms of their architecture;—in the